Americana on Bastille Day!

Numismagram Newsletter #152 (VII/2025)

The Fourth of July holiday occurred since our most recent beginning-of-July upload, and as a bit of a departure from some previous years, we're having a grouping of Americana-themed items (*13 in fact—one for each of the original colonies*) now rather than nearer the beginning of the month. Today certainly has its own significance in history and in revolutionary causes, as it is Bastille Day in France. Commemorating the storming of the Bastille Palace on 14 July 1789, it marks a prominent event in the French Revolution and their march toward democracy...kinda. France would continue on a wavering path between pseudo-dictatorships, emperors, kings, and republics a number of times before their current, modern form of governance. While America's hasn't wavered nearly as wildly or overtly, the current state of affairs isn't exactly something that the founders would have envisioned. Ans speaking of something else that our founders wouldn't have envisioned—our Fourth spread:

While the potato salad and cole slaw are classics (*vegan, of course*), the plant-based hot dogs (*not* dogs?) on gluten free bread probably seem a bit out there. Nevertheless, it all tastes just fine. And in terms of something to wash everything down, who can leave out an American classic…like a hazy triple IPA? Not exactly a Miller Lite—*and for good reason.*

Getting back to our founders, though, that brings us to the first of the highlights in this special holiday-themed upload. You'll note that all of the listings for this update aren't necessarily in alphabetical order based upon primary country of importance and/or manufacture, but are instead simply listed chronologically. Since this array spans 200 years of history (from 1763 to 1963), it made more sense to present everything temporally. For starters, here is a classic piece of Americana by way of France—a massive Benjamin Franklin portrait medal in terra cotta…

Dated 1777 and issued either one or two years later, it displays elegant artistry and craftsmanship for a founder revered just as much in France as here in America. So popular within France was Franklin that the creator of this medal, Jena-Baptiste Nini, made a supply for sale domestically in France alongside the supply that was designated for export to America. This medal type is listed in the *100 Greatest American Medals and Tokens* as #29.

Also from France, there's this wondrous analog to the ever-popular Libertas Americana medal…

Struck from melted down bells in 1792, it should also be instantly-recognizable as a related piece to the earliest cents and half cents issued at the Philadelphia mint. A very minor reverse edge flaw stemming from the bell metal composition can't hold back the stunning, well-executed nature of this "flowing hair" medal.

Staying with the colonial and early American theme, there is this silver jeton from France which also tends to be popular with colonial collectors:

Featuring masonic iconography, it also displays a prominent Eye of Providence, or All-Seeing Eye, at the center of a radiant field—very reminiscent of the Nova Constellatio coppers of 1783. This piece, graded MS-64, is the finest of just four seen in the PCGS census.

The 1893 World's Fair in Chicago, better known simply as the Columbian Expo, saw an immense output of exonumia from around the country and even from around the world. Four such pieces are a part of this upload, and here is one from them from the highly-accomplished medal manufacturer based in Milano, Stefano Johnson:

Named the "Civilization" medal, it pairs rather bold relief with intricacy of detail and is a type about which Russ Rulau wrote that "*...this medal is generally considered to be the most beautiful of all Columbian medals.*"

Moving to another exposition, though not nearly as widely known, there is this award medal from 1909…

Issued for the Alaska–Yukon–Pacific Exposition held in Washington, it would have served as the bronze (3rd place) prize medal for one of the classes.

Lastly, here is yet another piece from France. Already displaying an attractive Art Deco design, this "journalism" award has a rather intriguing awardee…

No, it's not *that* Douglas MacArthur—but he is related. Douglas II was the nephew of the famous general and had distinguished career as a diplomat himself. See the description of this piece for more of a picture into this accomplished American.

For all of this upload's new items, please click **here** or on the banner art at the top of this newsletter. We will be back again in early August (the 4th) with another great mix of museum-quality art, historical, and contemporary medals.

You are receiving this message because you have expressed an interest in our material or have purchased from us in the past.

If you would like to be removed from our mailing list, please simply reply to this message stating "remove me," and we will do so.

Pleasanton, Calif
+1 (717) 917-0047

Share on social

Check out our website